

OGLESBY SCHOOLS'

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

VISITOR/VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK





Early Childhood Program Mission Statement

It is the mission of this program to provide quality, developmentally appropriate, early childhood education to children ages three through five, who are not eligible for kindergarten. This program examines the needs of the children, families, school districts, and communities we serve. The curriculum addresses the identified needs. Understanding the parent is the child's first and most important teacher, every effort is made to help the family educate the child. This program has an important role in shaping the social, emotional, and intellectual development of the young child. The intent of this program is to provide enriching, enjoyable, and meaningful activities that nurture young children.



Prevention Initiative Grant – Families First Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Prevention Initiative Grant to provide guidance and support to families as they care for infants and/or young children. Aware of the issues families face every day, the parent education component of the early childhood program is committed to encouraging parents in the nurturing of their small children. Through educational programs, home visits, and other supports we provide assistance to parents in promoting quality relationships during the child's early years.



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

We welcome you to the Oglesby Early Childhood Education program. We recognize that parents and caregivers are the child's first and BEST teachers. As your child begins their pre-school journey, we would like to invite you to join with us in the education of your child through a variety of activities both in the home and school setting. Our program provides a Parent component, "Families First", which includes opportunities for you, the parents and caregivers, to visit the classroom, volunteer both in and out of the classroom setting, and to attend parenting programs. Parents and Caregivers are welcome to visit/volunteer as often as you like. This handbook will hopefully serve as your guide as you begin to visit and/or volunteer. Please feel free to ask if you have any questions regarding the contents of this Visitor/Volunteer Handbook. Again, we hope that you will visit and/or volunteer often. We very much look forward to working with all of you in the education of your children.

Everyone benefits from parent volunteers...

Studies show parental involvement improves students' learning experience and academic performance.

"Parents and family members can significantly impact their children's attitude and performance in school by getting involved with school events and activities," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "A parent doesn't need to spend every week at school to make a difference. Even a few hours each year can enhance your children's learning experience and benefit their school." "Research shows that family involvement positively impacts student success regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or education level because they're focused on their children and that attention reaps positive results."

- The children benefit when they are able to witness someone helping out from the goodness of their heart. The children are always so proud when their special someone comes to help/visit. They enjoy the company and are excited to share their learning with their loved one.
- The visitor/volunteer benefits as they are able to see first-hand what their child does in school. First-hand knowledge allows families the chance to intentionally communicate with their child about what they did at school on any given day. By volunteering, you teach your child how to reach out and help without expecting anything in return.
- The preschool program benefits from the support that is given by volunteers/visitors.

Volunteering permits the parents, teachers, and child to form a bond of trust, friendship, and security. The preschool staff strongly encourages you to come into your child's classroom and visit/volunteer often. The experience will be as rewarding for you as it is for your child.

Sincerely,

The Oglesby Preschool Staff



GUIDELINES and EXPECTATIONS

for VISITORS/VOLUNTEERS



- **CONFIDENTIALITY**– Please keep ALL personal information private. No child should be discussed outside the classroom.
- **UPON ARRIVAL**– Please buzz for entry into the building at the North doors. Upon entry you are required to register in the North office. You will be given a pass to wear while you are visiting. Once you have registered and have your pass, please go directly to your child’s classroom. You will sign-in outside the classroom door. If you have a stroller, we ask that you leave it outside the classroom when possible as it gets very crowded in the classrooms. You may hang your coat with your child’s in the closet area.
- **RESPECT**– We ask that visitors/volunteers familiarize themselves with our PBIS expectations and classroom rules. These are posted in each classroom as well as handed out during home visits. Your modeling and support of these rules during your visit is GREATLY appreciated.
- **LANGUAGE**– Please keep in mind that this is a classroom. We ask that you refrain from the use of inappropriate language during your visit.
- **ILLNESS**– Please DO NOT come to school when you are ill. A sibling who is ill (cold, fever, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.) SHOULD NOT visit the classroom until they are symptom free for 24 hours.
- **SIBLINGS**– If siblings come to visit the classroom they are welcome to join in activities with the understanding that siblings are the responsibility of the parent/caregiver.
- **QUESTIONS**–If you have questions about your own child, we are happy to speak with you about your concerns. Please talk to the teacher to set a time for conferencing.



We want to work with you to help you help your child. If you are most comfortable visiting with your child, please know that this is perfectly fine. If you are willing to help other students or volunteer within the classroom, please let the teacher know so that they can accommodate your wishes. Whichever activities you choose, please keep in mind the guidelines for visitors and volunteers to help insure a positive experience for all.



Ways In Which You Can Volunteer In the Classroom-

- Read to a child or group of children during story-time or center-time
- Come in as a guest to share your family's home language and/or culture with us
- Help prepare the snack (following preparation procedures hand-washing/gloves) and visit with the children while they eat. This allows for the students to engage in conversation, and if a child should need assistance you can direct the child and help when needed.
- Help students unpack upon arrival and pack for home during dismissal.
- Assist students with hand-washing by using verbal cues, helping with towels, etc.
- Re-stock centers with paper
- Check out classroom library books or lending materials on designated day
- Sanitize toys
- Assist in preparing materials for upcoming projects as assigned by the teacher
- Work with students in the various classroom centers. Within each center there is a list of how you can assist students with their learning in the specific center. We have provided a short synopsis for you on the next page.
- Assist teachers with upkeep of center materials
- Assist teachers in setting up the classroom or changing center materials

Ways In Which You Can Volunteer At Home-

- Assist with preparation of materials such as cutting, tracing, stapling, etc.
- Make Home-made play-dough for the class



WHAT CAN VOLUNTEERS DO AT THE CENTERS?

BLOCK CENTER— Children learn about size, shape, weight, spatial relationships, and problem solving. The volunteer can help children by encouraging safety practice, making sure the children do not build higher than their height, and encouraging the children to share and put things back where they belong when finished.

DRAMATIC PLAY— This center encourages children to pretend, imitate, and imagine. They develop creative thinking and problem solving skills. Volunteers can participate in the play and encourage children to extend their language through conversation. They can also encourage responsibility by reminding children to put things back where they belong.

SCIENCE CENTER— This gives children an opportunity to explore, question, experiment, and discover. The volunteer can ask open-ended questions (What, Why, How) and encourage observation and problem-solving skills.

SNACK CENTER— This center encourages independence and self-help skills. Volunteers can assist by preparing the snack, engaging the children in conversation during snack, and encouraging children to independently serve themselves and clean-up after themselves.

ART CENTER— This center encourages individual expression and creativity. The volunteer can assist by keeping supplies full (glue, paint, etc.) for the children, reminding children to write their names on projects, and assisting with name writing when needed. Volunteers can assist in changing the paper on the easel for children.

TABLE/FLOOR TOYS— Children experiment with size shape, seriation, patterning, one-to-one correspondence, comparisons, matching and sorting. The volunteer can play games with the children, allow for free-exploration of materials, and make sure there are no missing pieces.

LITERACY CENTER— This center helps develop literacy skills such as alphabet knowledge, writing skills, knowledge of books, expanded vocabulary, and helps to promote a love of literature and reading. The volunteer can read stories with children and/or help them retell or act them out using props such as felt pieces and/or puppets. Volunteers can also assist in teaching students how to look at books from front to back, one page at a time. Volunteers can take dictation from students and help them to create their own stories through extended conversations.

MUSIC CENTER— This area allows students to express themselves through creativity and music. Volunteers can assist with the CD player or the iPad. Volunteers can join children's play as they act-out familiar songs and rhymes.

SAND/WATER TABLES— These areas help children explore through tactile/sensory stimulation. Children enhance their cognitive skills as they explore the properties of water. They learn about problem-solving, verbal expression, socialization and emotional relaxation using these areas. Volunteers can assist with spills, engage children in conversation about their work, and ask open-ended, thought-provoking questions to help extend the learning.



What Do Open-ended Questions Do?

- Open-ended questions can produce more than one kind of response. Asking questions can encourage children to become even more involved in their activities, or they can produce an extended conversation. It encourages the children to use their imaginations, to think a little differently about what they are doing, and to respond in whatever way they like.
- When a child is beginning a task you can ask, “I wonder what you’re going to do with these blocks?” This encourages the child to plan ahead and talk about it.
- Open-ended questions don’t have right and wrong answers. They invite children to express their own ideas in their own words. These questions signal to children that their opinion counts, and you would like to hear what they think.
- Open-ended questions encourage children to recall what they’ve done and to practice talking about it. Children love to explain to an interested adult how they did something. These questions help them share how they accomplished something, what happened, why things came out the way they did, and how they felt. The conversation is all about what really interests the children.

What Types of Questions might STOP a conversation?

- Questions intended to test “What color is this?” “What letter is this?” Instead use more open questions like “What do you see?”
- Asking question after question after question
- Rhetorical, no response really needed
- Too simple or complex

(Taken from- Simple Solutions Educational Services 2011)



(Taken from **Beyond the Journal** Young Children on the Web September 2006)

Idea Starters: Use Open-Ended Questions with Children

Asking Open-Ended Questions

Closed questions (questions with one right answer):

How much is two plus two?

What color is this?

Which one do you like?

Adults can tell immediately when they've asked closed questions, because children respond with yes, no, or a single-word answer.

Open-ended questions (questions with many right answers):

I wonder . . .

Why do you think?

Describe what you see.

What does it look like to you?

How does that happen?

Why did it work that way?

What about this part?

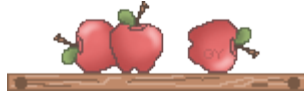
How can you tell?

How is this different?

Listen to the child's response and restate their answer or ask another probing, open-ended question in order to encourage the conversation to continue.



Please circle the activities you would be comfortable doing as a classroom volunteer.



- Read to a child or group of children during story-time or center-time
- Come in as a guest to share your family's home language and/or culture with us
- Help prepare the snack (following preparation procedures hand-washing/gloves) and visit with the children while they eat. This allows for the students to engage in conversation, and if a child should need assistance you can direct the child and help when needed.
- Help students unpack upon arrival and pack for home during dismissal.
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- Work with students in the various classroom centers. Within each center there is a list of how you can assist students with their learning in the specific center. We have provided a short synopsis for you on the next page.
- Assist teachers with upkeep of center materials
- Assist teachers in setting up the classroom or changing center materials

Please circle the activities you would be comfortable doing at home as a volunteer.



- Assist with preparation of materials such as cutting, tracing, stapling, etc.
- Make Home-made play-dough for the class





Please read the following statements and check all that apply. Please contact us with any questions you may have. Please return this page to school with your child. We look forward to working with you.

_____ I have read the handbook. I understand that visiting the classroom is a vital part of my child's education. I plan to visit to participate in classroom visitations as well as parent & child activity days. If I cannot attend, I understand that I may send another familiar, loved-one in my place to spend time with my child in the classroom.

_____ I understand that I am welcome to volunteer on a regular basis, and I would like to do so in the following capacity;

_____ In the classroom when I visit

_____ In the classroom on a regular schedule to be determined in cooperation with my child's teacher.

_____ I am unable to volunteer in the classroom, but would like to volunteer at home.

_____ I am unable to volunteer in the classroom, but my child has extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) that would like to volunteer in the classroom.

Please sign and date this form and return this page to school with your child.

Child's Name _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____